

In the claims:

Please cancel claims 6, 11, and 12 without prejudice.

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Claim 4 (Twice Amended). A process for the preparation of a protein having a molecular weight of about 24kd[, or a functionally equivalent variant or fragment thereof,] and capable of specifically binding to [a protein] E2 of hepatitis C virus, or for the preparation of a functionally equivalent variant or fragment thereof, comprising the steps of:

- D¹*
- i) contacting cells with a preparation of E2;
 - ii) [i] obtaining a membrane preparation from cells exhibiting binding to [an HCV protein] E2; and
 - iii) [ii)] purifying said protein from said preparation.

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E3
Claim 10 (Twice Amended). A process for the preparation of a protein [according to any one of claims 2-4] having a molecular weight of about 24kd and capable of specifically binding to E2 of hepatitis C virus, or a functionally equivalent variant or fragment thereof, comprising the steps of:

- D²*
- i) contacting cells with a preparation of E2;
 - ii) [i)] obtaining a membrane preparation from mammalian cells selected for binding to E2;
 - iii) [ii)] precipitating the preparation with ammonium sulphate at less than 33% saturation and retaining the supernatant;
 - iv) [iii)] precipitating the supernatant with ammonium sulphate at between 33 and 50% saturation and retaining the precipitate; and